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BY

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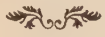
DOMINIS DILECTIS
QUAS AMAVI AMISSI

NEPENTHE



I

THIS verse—if verse it be—
Distillèd drops of life wrung out of longing.
Day by day, and night by night, different moods
ascendant,
The joy and then the grief.
High lights, low lights;
On the mountains—down in anguish dark.
Progression truly as a tale they lack.
As hopeless all began—so hopeless all its ends.
Each verse, a story in itself of that day's hope or
its despair.

II

The sea was in a raging mood
When first I seemed to feel her,
And deem her worth the knowing.
Next day we walked the deck
Discoursing many things that people do
Who find a world in common,—
Problems of soul and deep affairs of life.
Then rose a kinship, growing,
Imperceptible, subtle, moving on with a relentless hand.
Her heart was riven by a sorrow
Her face and eyes knew cruel dolorous nights.

III

My heart was surging with a mighty longing,
For such a Grace as I beheld.
I told her much of aspirations long since dead
And new ones nascent,
Waiting for the touch of such a one as she.

IV

One night while sitting on the deck
Watching the great stars and moon and shimmering of the ocean,
We felt the mighty undertow of an emotion
That stirred our hearts, impelled, our lips spake forth.
Would it had ne'er been spoken!

V

I told her how my youth was spent
Brought up by those who could not understand
my yearnings,
Hemmed in and wellnigh crushed by old
traditions,
Of customs owning to an alien land and race;
That searching ever for a human love,
I found it mirage-like from me receding,
A maddening rainbow ever farther, more
retreating,
Yet still elusive with its hope of yet more hope.
Till now with youth slow-ebbing from me,
I could view the starry glory of her life,
A singing hope, now plunged in dank despair.

VI

There is a right so holy
That if a son of God should dare
To step within the precincts of that right,
He'd pitch with darkest black his very soul.

VII

I saw her more than Dante, Beatrice.
But a swift fleeting glance Alighieri caught;
While I, I had four days of riot of gazing
That seemed to me but a segment second of time.

VIII

Not as Tristan did I drink the philtre,
Nor she as Isold, but yet some mystic
Subtle influence touched us when we met,
And will pursue us doubtless to the last.

IX

She has no beauty as the world would say;
She has a beauty born of heaven
Won out of quiet wrestling with grief,
Of holding firm unto the hands Divine.
I feel so intimately her soul's essence
That I cannot conjure up her earthly shape.
And yet I see the little tricks of her,
The nodding of the head, the movement of the
hands,
The quiet dignity compelling.

X

Her voice—ah yes, the gentle Southern drawl
Distilled to music, its harshness all dispelled.
The dear, dear "very" with the "y" clipped off.
Saint Memory now it is, a zephyr, borne
Over the vast of waters and of leagues.

XI

Her eyes! they spoke a liquid music to me;
Deep, fathomless, quickening the mute strings of
the heart;
Grey and violet were the hues they showed.
Grey when moved by purpose of the right,
Violet when driven by a deep emotion.
Ah! those eyes they haunt me with their film of
tears!

XII

Her hair by breezes wafted blew soft against my
face
While o'er the rail we leaned,
Watching continents of ocean rise and swiftly
fall again,
Like to our hopes which rose a second
Filling our hearts with momentary joy.

XIII

I touched her hair—and bathed
My fingers in its balmy wealth,
A wealth of brown, soft silken symphony!

XIV

I never dared to ask a lock of hair.
Only withered violets, memory of a night in
Naples,
Symbol of our dead love is that which now
remains.
Nothing but these verses—yes—
A line with her name and—
And a poplar leaf she gave me in a garden in
Algiers—
In Algiers—our glorious Eden of a little day—
so short.

XV

There is no hope—how can there be?
And we still live to be ourselves.
There's nothing left, but lees,
And looming of the dawning of a day.
Back to the world of duty must we go,
To other skies and worlds.
'Twas but a dream in Italy, a castle built in
Spain,
A day in Algiers—O my love, how sweet!

XVI

I go away to what men call my "home."
My home is in your heart, where'er you are.
But ever more an exile must I wander far and
wide,
A memory of that dream seared deep within my
soul.

XVII

I feel as does the man returning to an empty
house
When all the last sad rites are o'er.
So desolate, so alone, yet not perchance
With hope like his—but hopeless.
My cry is to the Lord of Right.
I am of men most miserable, I am without a hope.
I dare not ask for help, for fear that
Fourfold more the child of hell I'd be
If I should gain my will.
To be a man is first my quest in this my earthly
sphere,
And to be traitor to myself, 'twould
Surely be a traitor unto her.

XVIII

Dear Dream! thou art so near to me
All save thy form I feel.
I long to image forth your face—
Nought but your eyes I see.

XIX

Dear Lady, you are all of woman to me,
All that is sweet in life and truth and faith;
High bred, gentle, firm, demanding of my labor
All I know to reach your worth.
Here I bow in lowly reverence toward you,
Toward those dear, dear hands,
I may not even kiss.

XX

Dearest! I am saving all my dreams to tell you,
All the thoughts I've sheltered deep within my
heart.
All the glorious things I've read and thought
In the weary lonesome aeons of the past.
These songs are fancied segments of the mirage
Conjured up before my weary brain,
In the sweet idyll dreamed of
In the splendid lands of Spain and Rome.

XXI

My sweet misery it is to sit in desolate quiet,
Dreaming of the golden days that are no more,
Of cerulean waters, skies and storied summits,
Amalfi splendent and Sorrento rich,
The heavenly love,—the hallowed story,
Which quickens into life the scenes now gone,
That world so irrecoverably fair!

XXII

You too mayhap have dreamt these dreams
Are dreaming them tonight
In the land of never-never, I in the land of
    hope-more-hope.
From out of the depths of hopelessness I glean
A purpose, to approximate your high estate
Of thoughts, of worship, trust and good.

XXIII

I gaze upon the Promised Land from
an Empyrean height,
I gaze and see a glory that is not mine,
And dare not move lest I should mar the beauty
that is there.
Like to a precious cèramic beyond all price,
Which at a touch from me will shatter into ruin,
She looms above the common plane of life.
The Lord of Might gave me the strength
To keep that Treasure whole,
A votive offering in His hall of Grace,
San Graal for all the days that are.

* * *

XXIV

I never thought to see your face again
Save as portrayed in a dream,
When the sweet god of sleep would grant a boon
To ease my aching heart with sight of you.
The ship that brings you back to me
Will bring surcease from sorrow for a term.

XXV

You seemed a vision sitting in a charm—there at
a distance;
An aureole encircling all yourself—a substance
barely earthly.
O how my heart burst forth—it scarcely could
contain itself.
Ah! what a dread, dear joy the meeting was;
And when I gazed into your eyes, I felt a thrill
divine.
But you must now go on to where your duty waits
And doleful days will follow on with lagging feet.
Source of all my inspiration and despair
There is a glory in the thought of thee!

XXVI

The violets I gave I see you press
With sweet caresses in your dear, dear hands,
As if they were myself, my very soul—
Each floweret like a little heart
Enfolding in one blessed embrace
Its sacred, solitary secret,—love.

XXVII

A dizzy blazing dream you lighted up my world
And when you left me, how my heart sank sick.
Ah, those hours of converse—will they never
more return!
'Twill be a memory soon, a joyous painful one.

XXVIII

Maid of the Mist! you fade away in corporeal
splendor.
You gleamed a shining meteor in my heaven and
then sped westward;
Each second marking oceans of eternity between
us.
Leaving a desolation in your wake.

XXIX

Dear Heart! how drear the world is now to me;
Today so desolate—yesterday so rich.
I love, Oh! how I love your dear, sweet face,
Wan, stained with tears.
Your eyes, your smile, your little white, white
teeth,
Showing between the red, red lips.
I hope, Oh, how I hope, O God of Love defend
me!
O Love, Oh, pray, but not to me, I am but clay.
There is no glory in the sun today.

XXX

Oh, that we to the Lotos Land could go—
Like Ulysses and his storm-tossed crew;
Forget the rights and duties of today,
The petty strife of men, the irksome yoke of must,
And never more might wake to thoughts of grinding rounds.
Oh, Lethe were a joyous drink to quaff for one sweet hour.
But still a living, stinging conscience rouses us
To nail ourselves anew upon the cross each day, each hour.

XXXI

Dearheart! I love to sit and think
Of you and of those lovely days.
Days so exquisite that the very thought of them
Quickens my blood and makes my eyes to gleam.

XXXII

The memories linger with a sweet suspense
Wrapped in a splendor ecstatic—sublime
An impulse new revivifies my life
And turns it all to song, compelling and complete.

XXXIII

Come not when I am old, and all my faculties are
dim.
Come in the fullness of our summer time
To crown my manhood with your wondrous love.
Come as my breath of life, my dreams all true,
Companion, guide and wife.

XXXIV

Come as I long to see you come, O girl adored!
With eyes a-gleaming, grey and true.
Come with those parted lips and outstretched
arms—
Come—to me all sufficient—utterly my own.

XXXV

And I would bid thee come and stay
Forever thou and I, come what come may,
No weariness the days would have,
All joyous song, dross burned away.

XXXVI

I would hold you in my arms and bid you quiet
And tell you that I love you highly, wholly,
And bid the spectres of despair to flee—
Singing you verses of the mighty masters
    wounded as we
Pouring their words an anodyne upon our pain.
Then would we be refreshed with strength
To meet the issues—or perhaps the God of
    Grace
Might look upon our pain and give us peace,
But best of all, to give you me, and me to you.

XXXVII

Ah, when I think of you, my darling,
The thought brings peace.
Troubled, weary, forlorn—a raging storm within
You pour a calm upon the tumult of my soul.

XXXVIII

You are to me some splendid gift of God
Sent in my night of wandering in the gloom
Of longings, yearnings, unfulfilled
A gift which lifts me ever closer to the Unseen,
Whom I would love and serve with brighter
sight,
Than my blind way.

XXXIX

Your love to me is a most wondrous thing
Which like the glorious evening star burns
bright.
A beacon light, a guide unto my stumbling soul
Confused, bewildered in this erring swirl.

XL

You are to me an endless song
Which I can sing and sing.
A golden, ever cadent concord.
Recurrent, splendid notes—da capo—ever new.

XLI

As stars of hope your grey eyes shine,
And speak a never-dying memory sweet—
outvying every dream.
Like the most beauteous tale to me was ever told,
They bid me trust that all this blissful story must
come true.

XLII

Dear, Lovely Lady, with the shining eyes—
Whose boundless love illumines all my days:
Dear Sylphlike form whose supple grace
Entrances all my senses—all my thought.

XLIII

My Dearest Love! well do I know the deeps
to which we must descend
Ah! many spans of bitter perverse hours
Must be your lot and mine,
Before the heights be reached.

XLIV

There is a longing, tense, unsatisfied
That tears the heart and sodden makes the mind;
A yearning—ocean-deep—whose currents
Lead, —ah God knows where.

XLV

My spirit-life is at its lowest ebb,
My faith in the Unseen seems but a flickering
flame—
Uncertain, fearful, dreading life's intent,
No firm resolve, an aimless drifting, onward and
then back again.
I have a hope and yet it seems so dim,
Yet if this hope were dead what would there be
to strive for!
It is my love for whom I yearn with every
breath,
Dear, Lovely Lady with the sad grey eyes.
There are wild moments when I'd fight and win
in spite of all,
And there are calmer moments when I pause and
think and pray.

XLVI

Nirvana! dulcet wealth of meaning to my ear,
Oblivion! kind nepenthe for my longing soul—
And end of dull and weary waiting for the face
that never comes.

XLVII

Nothing to hope for—nothing to expect.
Life a monotone repeating daily grinds.
Love but a memory, incentive dead and gone,
Not even dreams to cheer the passing days.

XLVIII

Vain are these dreams—my words but snares,
To lift us high to Heaven and drop to Erebus.
Winged dreams that, Icarus like,
Melt before the sun
Falling, like a dying star.

XLIX

Fate's hand of steel hard pressed upon our
souls
It bids us sever the last link—even the link of
longing memory.
Fate is another name for Right.

L

Grim are my days—bereft of every mood,
That makes for any peace of mind.
My loneliness grows tense and still more tense.
No ken of mine can find assuage for pain that
gnaws
My soul and leaves it stark and dour.

LI

Ah! may there be a grace now to renounce
A passion vain that haunts my every hour!
Even though a tortured heart and anguished
mind
May mark me among men through dull, dull
years;
Still right is better than a shame
And a calm mind the nobler part.

LII

Dearest, I cannot sit and dream o'er things
attainable
Save at a cost, where every instinct true
And every standard raised to keep life sweet
Is cast away, and this must never be.

LIII

I loved you with a holy passion, Darling!
And though my years may far exceed the longest
span;
Yet evermore the shadow of a splendor
Will hover o'er me while my senses last.

LIV

Now as my dream departs to shadow-land,
Ebbing away like to a passing soul,
With saner sight I see, than erst
When holden were my eyes.
Down from the heights where I have dwelt
With love, I must descend
And tread the sad, sad ways, where mortals
dwell.

LV

No more the high ecstatic moments live—
Dread commonplace my daily round
And all the marvels that I once did know
Are blasted,—ashes blown to an unknown abyss.
Clearly I lived this life in wonder realms,
With hope of glory—almost in a spirit land,
On rarest heights, far o'er the frets of men,
Disturbed but by her frown or perverse mood.

LVI

Gone is my castle of dreams
And the high rock of endeavor.
The sun burns dim.
The shadows fade.
The pulse of life is low.

LVII

At least one lofty life I've led
And kept the faith fought for through days of
strife.
Because I loved her soul and loved the right
I chose the desperate days—
Sweetheart, Farewell!

II

I

Exquisite Pagan sent from long ago
To brighten all my hours with converse gay!
Like to a joyous figure on Tanagra vase
With all the aesthetic abandon now renewed
You flit in Grecian loveliness, confusing every
thought;
Or as Undine quaint, your witcheries you cast.
Exquisite Pagan sent from long ago
Joying my hours with an embrace sweet
Your spell is wrought—a willing thrall am I
Tanagra Darling! Intangible Undine!

II

To hold you tight—to feel the heart-throbs clear
against my breast,
To hear you say, you love me—that burning
kisses thrill.
The merge of space, eternity in that embrace,
All things clean forgot—that moment quickly
sped.

III

I sometimes think that those old Pagan Gods
Still live—that some of us are Greeks in thought
and deed,
That a delusion was the voice, that sighed through
woods,
And breathed "Great Pan is dead."

IV

Those beads—Ah! yes, that necklace of
translucent amber
I hung about your neck a summer's day
A year ago—after the long, long absence from
your arms
They were the symbol of my love for you
A bond so dear—that ever as I gazed upon their
sheen
They seemed the real presence of your faith to
me.

. . . . . .

How ugly now they seem—only yellow spheres—
transmuted gold
Baubles—flippant finery, vacuous.
Each an accusing Erinnys when once
They spelt each one the tend'rest thoughts.

III

I

Oh, your lips *must* sing, your heart may weep
And a longing without measure may consume you
as you sing.
Lonesome I must follow with nought a word or
murmur
Knowing you were lent a second to exalt me, to
sustain me.

II

Never will she smile, as once she did
I may see her, touch her hand,
Feel a heart-pulse feebly answer
But in heart-beats, Oh, how fearful!
For a little it may thrill her
Then she will suppress her longings
As surely I must mine forever.

III

In the night I waken sadly
Yearning for another's presence
One that's dead and gone forever
To the dream land whence she came.

IV

I do not know whether 'twould be my wish
For freedom from fetters, conventions that do
bind
So sorely when 'gainst the goads I kick.
The blood runs quick—a woman's love—
God lack—why strive at all,
Why not achieve—*vivamus dum vivimus!*

V

But with this sensuous frame
How hard it is to live without the human touch.
Few may be Saints, e'en though the spirit wills.
The world with all its lure of dross
Sings on its evanescent song.

VI

I will always see the happy frank face bending
o'er me
Like a dear child's or a woman's noble mood
surround me.
All my strivings—all my reachings—fortunes,
never—never for you,
Nothing I can give and lay down at your feet,
Saying this I won with all the odds so dead
against me,
This I had in fiendish conflict with the hell that
raged within me.
In the thickest of the struggle hear your voice
speak courage to me
In the hour of disaster with your tender arms
about me
Gird me fresh to meet the onslaught
Hold my hands up when I faltered.
When all peace gone and heart burns only
Hold me so—that I might worship.

(GAX)
c.1

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